(b) the number of such affected Indians;

(c) whether Government is taking any steps to provide the necessary facilities to the affected Indians so that they come to India; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) No.

(c) and (d) Passport facilities are provided to Indian citizens by our Missions abroad expeditiously after completion of the prescribed procedures. Indian nationals living abroad do not require a visa to return to India. Persons of Indian Origin with a foreign nationality are granted visas expeditiously in keeping with the relevant norms.

Guidelines for issuing passports

1088. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is considering to revise the guideline for issuing passport;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) to what extent it would help for issuing passports faster; and

(d) the average time taken presently to issue passports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) The Government had entrusted the National Institute of Smart Government (NISG), Hyderabad with the task of undertakings a time-bound study on the passport issuance system, including its IT aspects with the objective to *deliver passport related services to the citizens in a timely, transparent, more accessible, reliable manner.* NISG has submitted its report, which has been accepted by the Government it has been decided to launch "Passport Seva Project".

The proposal is to have 68 Passport Facilitation Centres all over the country where the non-sovereign functions, involved in the passport issuance process, such as initial scrutiny of the application forms, acceptance of fee, scanning of the documents, taking photos, etc. will be done by the service provider to be selected through an open bidding process. The Government staff at the Passport Facilitation Centres will verify the documents and decide on granting of Passport. The other activities such as printing and dispatch will also be done by the Government staff. Police verification will be expedited through electronic linkage of the Passport Facilitation Centres with the police authorities in State Capitals.

(c) and (d) The Project is expected to result in the issue of passports within 3 days and in cases, which require police verification, within 3 days after the completion of the verification process. Average time presently taken to issue passports is 45 days and for re-issue 15 days.